

February 7, 2020

## **DOH-CITRUS IDENTIFIES CASE OF HEPATITIS A IN FOOD SERVICE WORKER; ENCOURAGES VACCINATION**



### **CONTACT:**

Audrey Stasko, Public Information Officer

[Audrey.Stasko@FLHealth.gov](mailto:Audrey.Stasko@FLHealth.gov)

352-423-0775, cell

352-513-6057, work

The Florida Department of Health in Citrus County (DOH-Citrus) has identified a positive case of hepatitis A in a food service worker in Homosassa.

DOH-Citrus conducted an epidemiological investigation and today determined an individual who worked at Old Mill Tavern, located at 10465 W. Yulee Dr. in Homosassa, during January 19 thru February 3 may have been infectious.

The hepatitis A vaccine may provide protection against the disease if given within two weeks after exposure. Therefore, the hepatitis A vaccination is recommended for anyone who ate or drank at this restaurant between January 24 thru February 3. Those who consumed food or beverage between January 19 thru January 23 should instead observe for signs and symptoms of hepatitis A infection. This includes sudden onset of abdominal discomfort, nausea, vomiting, dark urine, fever, diarrhea, pale white stools, or yellow skin and eyes (jaundice). Anyone experiencing these symptoms should promptly seek medical attention.

If you previously have received the hepatitis A vaccine or have had a past history of a Hepatitis A infection, you are considered immune to the Hepatitis A virus and do not need to take additional action.

**Those with specific questions about exposure to hepatitis A at Old Mill Tavern can call 352-527-0068 to reach DOH-Citrus.**

DOH-Citrus is encouraging all health care providers, including hospital emergency departments to stay on high alert and immediately report cases of Hepatitis A to DOH-Citrus, as well as identify those who would benefit from vaccination.

Contact your county's health department for hepatitis A vaccinations if you live outside Citrus County. Vaccination is the best way to prevent hepatitis A. People who should be vaccinated for hepatitis A include:

- All children at the age of 12 months
- People who are experiencing homelessness
- Users of recreational drugs, whether injected or not
- Men who have sexual encounters with other men
- People with direct contact with others who have hepatitis A
- Travelers to countries where hepatitis A is common

- People with chronic / long-term liver disease, including hepatitis B or hepatitis C
- People with clotting-factor disorders
- Family and caregivers of adoptees from countries where hepatitis A is common

DOH-Citrus is offering the hepatitis A vaccine at no cost for individuals who ate or drank at this restaurant between January 24 thru February 3 at the health department in Lecanto, 3700 W. Sovereign Path on the following dates:

- Saturday, February 8, from 9 a.m. to noon
- Monday, February 10, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

### **What is Hepatitis A?**

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious disease that attacks the liver. People infected with hepatitis A are most contagious from two weeks before onset of symptoms to one week afterwards. Not everyone who is infected will have all the symptoms. Symptoms usually start within 28 days of exposure to the virus with a range of 15-50 days. Symptoms can include:

- Jaundice (yellowing skin and whites of eyes)
- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue/tired
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Dark-colored urine
- Pale or clay colored stool

### **How is hepatitis A treated or hepatitis A infection prevented?**

Hepatitis A vaccine is the best method of preventing infection.

Practicing good hand hygiene plays an important role in preventing the spread of hepatitis A.

Use soap and running water and wash for at least 20 seconds, wash hands after changing a diaper or caring for a person, and wash hands before preparing, serving or eating food.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers do not kill the hepatitis A virus.

No medicines can cure the disease once symptoms appear. People with hepatitis A symptoms should seek medical care immediately.

Most people get better over time but may need to be hospitalized.

Previous infection with hepatitis A provides immunity for the rest of a person's life.

People that are exposed to hepatitis A may be given vaccine or immune globulin within 14 days of exposure to prevent infection.

### **How Hepatitis A is Investigated by the Department of Health**

After a case of hepatitis A has been reported to the FDOH by a health care provider, a county health department (CHD) epidemiologist will interview the individual and collect information regarding the timeline of their previous 50 days, including travel, occupation, drug use, food history and more. The epidemiologist will then identify close contacts of the ill person. If given within 14 days, the hepatitis A vaccine will help prevent infection among anyone exposed to the virus. As with the national outbreak, the majority of cases of hepatitis A in Florida are close contacts of persons experiencing homelessness or persons who use or inject drugs. Less than 5% of cases have been identified among food workers. To date, FDOH has not identified a case of hepatitis A transmission from a food worker to a restaurant patron.

For more information about DOH-Citrus, visit [www.CitrusCountyHealth.org](http://www.CitrusCountyHealth.org) or follow us on Twitter at [@FLHealthCitrus](https://twitter.com/FLHealthCitrus).

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